

THE SWAN PRINCE

THE KILLING OF TCHAIKOVSKY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY MART SANDER



31 October, 1893, St Petersburg. Eight prominent men, one-time school class mates of the composer Tchaikovsky, have gathered to pass a sentence on the man, who has now been summoned to stand trial before a court of honour. For many, the composer has been walking on thin ice for some time now: his association with the shadier side of St. Petersburg's life and numerous affairs with teenage boys are no longer a secret in society. They threaten the composer with public exposure, disgrace to his family and the ensuing ban on his music. Alternatively, an escape route is offered: should Tchaikovsky agree to 'the honourable way out', taking arsenic in careful doses over the next three days, the brotherhood will secure his position as the greatest Russian composer for all times. So runs the theory...

The author of the play Mart Sander is a well-known musician, artist and author. Sander fell in love with Tchaikovsky's music in his early childhood and has often performed it on the stage. According to him, there is no great conflict in the life of the composer: "Sin and virtue are concepts, which are not only conventional, but also variable. If sin – or more precisely, the public agreement upon that particular sin – fuels the element of creativity, ignites the flame where noble and valuable things are forged in, then perhaps it is us, who have to renew our standpoint?"



In his play, Mart Sander goes a step further from the theory, which nowadays is accepted as the most probable cause for the composer's death. He suggests that the eight people involved, were not acting merely to protect their alma mater, but rather themselves: in 'The Swan Prince', everyone who passes sentence on Tchaikovsky, has a purely selfish motive. He also suggests, that real cruelty is not so much to attack your victim's jugular and rip him apart, but to kill your friend with a smile on your lips, in an emotionless, methodical, matter-of-fact manner.

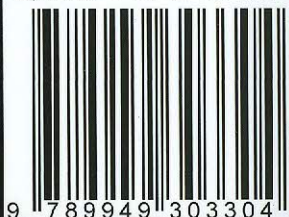
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